



TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE & LEISURE COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 25 July 2023

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| REPORT TITLE: | COMMUNITY SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT |
| REPORT OF: | ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: NEIGHBOURHOODS, SAFETY & TRANSPORT |

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides an update on key activity in relation to two of the ten thematic areas of Wirral Community Safety Strategy (2021-2026); Violent Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour.

RECOMMENDATION

The Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee is requested to note the content of the report and highlight any areas requiring further clarification or action.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 To ensure Members of the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee have the opportunity to monitor the performance of the Council and partners in relation to Community Safety.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 This report has been developed in line with a request from Members of this Committee. No other options have been considered.

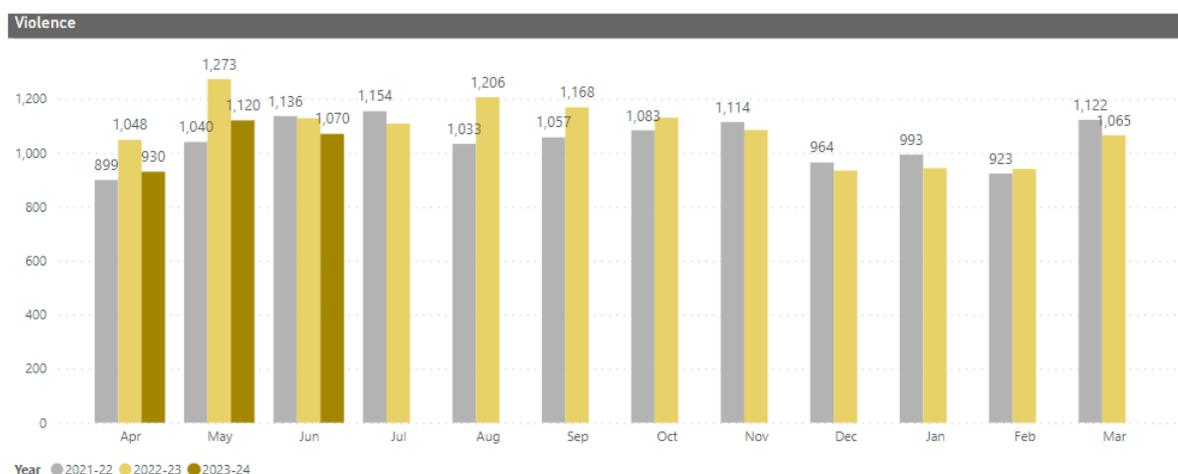
3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 It is a statutory responsibility under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 for Councils to lead on the production of a coherent Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy (Community Safety Strategy). Wirral's Community Safety Strategy (2021-26) was endorsed by full Council on 6 September 2021, minute 29 refers. This sets out ten thematic areas for focused activity. Safe & Vibrant Communities is a key thematic priority in the Wirral Plan (2021-26).
- 3.2 The Assistant Director of Neighbourhoods, Safety and Transport was requested to provide regular updates (at least annually) to Tourism, Communities, Culture & Leisure Committee on progress made in respect to the delivery of the Community Safety Strategy (27 July 2021, minute 18 refers). Periodic performance reports in relation to Community Safety have been reported to this Committee, utilising data captured in the Safer Wirral Tracker; an award-winning interactive Power BI report created by Wirral Intelligence Service. This report does not seek to replicate that information, most recently reported on 9 March 2023 (minute 76 refers), but to provide a more in-depth update on key activity in relation to two thematic areas; Violent Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour.

4.0 PREVENTING AND TACKLING VIOLENT CRIME

- 4.1 The number of offences of violent crime can be seen in Table 1 below. Violent crime has seen a reduction in 2023/4; this is primarily due to a reduction in domestic violence, which has reduced by 20%. Non-domestic abuse related offences have reduced by 3%. Non-domestic violence with injury has reduced by 5%, without injury by 0.5% and stalking & harassment has reduced by 0.5%.

Table 1: Violent crime (April 2021 – June 2023):



4.2 Over the past two years, Wirral has seen escalating issues with organised crime related violence. In the last four months of 2022, there were five firearms discharges resulting in two fatalities: October 2022 resulting in the fatal shooting of 53-year-old Jacqueline Rutter in Moreton and on Christmas Eve 2022, the fatal shooting of 26-year-old Elle Edwards outside The Lighthouse Pub, Wallasey Village. On 6 July 2023 after a 16-day trial, Connor Chapman aged 23 of Woodchurch was found guilty of her murder and also found guilty in relation to a number of other related offences. On 7 July 2023, he was sentenced to life imprisonment, to serve a minimum of 48 years.

4.3 In response to the escalation, Merseyside Police drew officers across the Force to support activity to prevent and tackle serious organised crime, through Operation Remove. Regular co-ordination of activity took place with officers from Community Safety. The Operation was effective in disrupting Organised Crime Groups (OCG) activity; the conviction of a number of OCG members; tenancy enforcement action including evictions by social housing providers; Gang Injunctions and other enforcement activity; together with seizures of cash and goods related to the proceeds of crime. This Operation was stood down in April/May 2023, with the co-ordination cell of the operation remaining in situ, led by a Sergeant, and the targeted focus upon serious organised crime continuing. There has not, at the time of writing this report, been any further firearms discharge in Wirral this year.

4.4 **EVOLVE – Clear, Hold, Build**

4.4.1 A multi-agency partnership tactic was launched in May 2023 – Clear, Hold, Build – which has been designed and part-funded by the Home Office to rescue and regenerate areas most affected by serious and organised crime. The three-phase initiative, known locally as Wirral EVOLVE, uses a combination of targeted high-visibility police operations and covert policing tactics alongside activity from partners and input from residents to protect communities and prevent organised crime groups from operating. Building upon this approach initially piloted in Beechwood, this has been extended to the areas of Woodchurch and Noctorum.

4.4.2 Clear

The 'Clear' element of the strategy sees the relentless pursuit of gang members using all available criminal, civil and regulatory powers, and tactics to clear an area, removing and impeding the Organised Crime Group's (OCG) ability to operate. This will increase and restore community confidence by removing the threat and creating safer places and spaces. Operation Remove referenced above formed part of this phase.

4.4.3 Hold

To continue activity to 'Hold' the location, to prevent other OCG members capitalising on the vacuum created, as they seek to capture illicit markets or gain influence over the local area. Community confidence will be improved by ensuring those areas made safe remain so and perceptions of improved security, reassurance and confidence are not undermined.

4.4.4. Build

The community is enabled to become more assertive and confident and reduce permissive behaviours, tolerance to illicit goods and services and criminal/anti-social behaviour. The living, working and recreational environment will be improved for local residents by empowering them to work with stakeholders, generating resilience and build a safer community. Partner agency and stakeholder connectivity is increased, to improve local services based on need.

4.4.5 An Operational Delivery Group (ODG), just formed, is chaired by the Assistant Director for Neighbourhoods, Safety & Transport and consists of representatives from across Wirral Council, Merseyside Police, Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service, Wirral Probation Service, NHS, social landlords and the business and community sectors. The purpose of this group is to oversee and co-ordinate the activity in the three EVOLVE locations. It is important to note that the three stages of EVOLVE are not fixed time periods and the locations are likely to 'flex' between the stages.

4.4.6 A performance dashboard has been developed in Power BI by Wirral Intelligence Service, building further upon the exemplary Safer Wirral Tracker. The dashboard collates data across the EVOLVE areas relating to crime, anti-social behaviour, population data, economic conditions, substance misuse, hospital admissions and school exclusions. These data sets may be extended as the work of the ODG develops.

4.4.7 Strategic governance includes the reporting of performance outcomes to the Home Office and Clear, Hold, Build Project Board chaired by the Superintendent for Local Policing, which oversees EVOLVE performance in Wirral, Liverpool, Knowsley, and Sefton.

4.4.8 In addition to above, the data from the EVOLVE programme is also being analysed to determine any wider, health-related determinants from the programme.

4.5 Activity to tackle violent crime

4.5.1 The key initiative outlined above is supported by a plethora of activity across the Community Safety Partnership to tackle violence. Key elements of the Council's contribution have been highlighted below.

4.5.2 **Emergency Control Centre**

The Council's Emergency Control Centre (formerly the Emergency Control Room and Wirral Community Patrol service) has undergone a reconfiguration over the past eight months, brought about in part to respond to corporate efficiencies taken in 2022/3, but also to refocus its resources upon key priorities. Operating from a state-of-the-art centre, funded through Home Office Safer Streets Fund and Town Deal Accelerated Grant, a network of over 145 CCTV cameras is monitored 24/7 to prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour and crime and protect public safety, in both public spaces and some Council buildings. The service also handles out-of-hours emergency calls for the Council and can deploy Community Safety Officers to incidents both proactively and reactively. The CCTV network feeds directly into Merseyside Police Joint Command Centre for improved situational awareness and the Emergency Control Centre (ECC) is now directly linked to Merseyside Police dispatchers and officers on the ground via Airwave radio, which is proving invaluable in tackling live incidents of anti-social behaviour and crime.

4.5.3 The successes of this enhanced approach to partnership working tackling crime and anti-social behaviour in Wirral are demonstrated by additional financial investment into the Council's CCTV network by Merseyside Police funding the purchase and installation of fixed and rapid deployable CCTV cameras targeting serious and violent crime as part of Operation Target. This network of both fixed cameras and temporary cameras deployable to hot-spot locations, is being extended further this year through funding secured from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) to design out crime.

4.5.4 **Emergency Help Points**

Funding from both Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership and Wirral Community Safety Partnership saw in March 2023 the implementation of a network of 28 Emergency Help Points across the borough in town centres, coastal areas, hot-spots of violent crime and other places where larger number of people are likely to gather or visit. The Help Points, attached to CCTV columns and clearly identifiable by distinctive yellow signage, provide instant, direct, two-way audio connection with the ECC that people can use if they find themselves in difficulty or danger. The attached CCTV camera automatically redirects to focus on the Help Point upon activation, enabling ECC Officers to immediately monitor the situation and alert emergency services if necessary. Further details can be found [here](#). Whilst it is early days, the Help Points have already been used in relation to the reported commission of three offences, Streetscene matters, and a period of time was spent supporting a vulnerable individual.

4.5.5 **Prevention**

There is a wide range of preventative activity to tackle violence both perpetrated by children/young people and as victims. One such activity is 'In The Zone', led by Wirral Youth Justice Service, and providing a bespoke carousel event for all Year 9 pupils in mainstream secondary schools and alternative provision in Wirral. To date the intervention has reached over 4,000 young people. The 'zone' interventions are focused on risks outside the home including knife crime, exploitation, ASB and gangs, drugs & alcohol, and peer pressure. Feedback from schools and children about the impact of the intervention has been very positive.

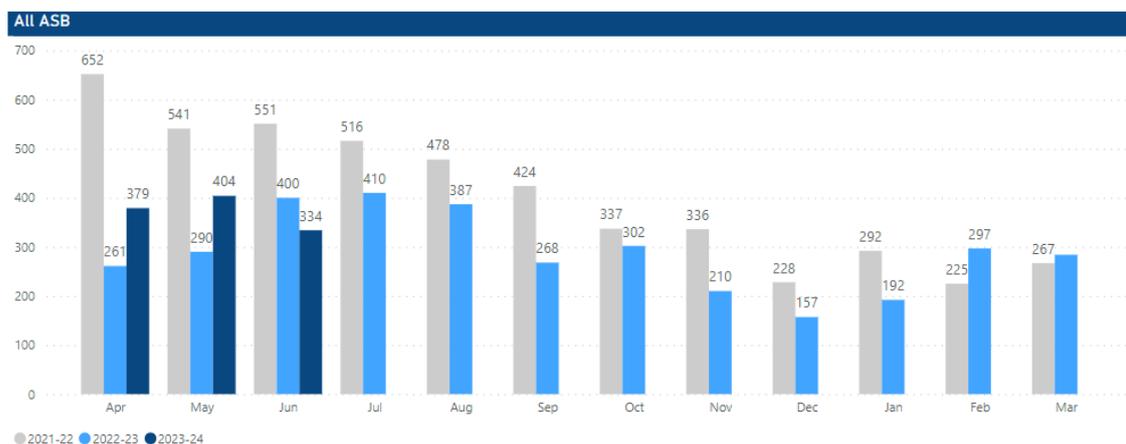
4.6 Serious Violence Duty

- 4.6.1 Introduced as part of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, the Serious Violence Duty requires specified authorities to work together to prevent and reduce serious violence in their local area. This Duty is supported by national guidance, finalised in December 2022, which balances prescriptive expectations with room for flexibility. There are three core elements of the Duty: 1) Understand local issues through the preparation of a local Strategic Needs Assessment, 2) Prepare, publish, and implement a strategy (January 2024) and 3) Review the strategy to understand impact and change.
- 4.6.2 The Home Office has recently commissioned Crest Advisory to work with local areas to assess their readiness to deliver the Duty and provide tailored support. Police & Crime Commissioners have a 'convening' responsibility within their respective area in relation to the Duty. Preparedness work across Merseyside is being co-ordinated through Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership, which is co-chaired by Merseyside Police and the Merseyside Police & Crime Commissioner's Office. A Joint Readiness Assessment was completed by Crest Advisory for Merseyside in May 2023. The analysis suggests that serious violence prevalence and risk in Merseyside is high. The assessment is that Merseyside is "ready and engaged" to respond to the duty.
- 4.6.3 As part of a reconfiguration, the new post of Serious Violence Reduction Co-ordinator is currently being recruited to within the Community Safety service, to assist the Council and Community Safety Partnership in meeting its obligations under the new Duty.

5.0 TACKLING ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

- 5.1 The number of incidents of anti-social behaviour (ASB) reported to Merseyside Police can be seen in Table 2 below. Although there has been an increase in incidents of ASB in 2023/4 (April–June), the June volume has decreased by 17% compared to June 2022, mainly due to a reduction in ASB by adults. Overall, youth related ASB in 2023/4 is 45% higher than the same period last year, although 2% lower than the same period in 2021/2. The peak day and time across Wirral for youth related ASB is Fridays and 7pm.

Table 2: Incidents of Anti-Social Behaviour (April 2021 – June 2023):



- 5.2 The Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Team, which is co-located across both Local Policing areas, works closely with Merseyside Police and other partners to identify and target perpetrators of anti-social behaviour (ASB) and offenders and utilise the tools and powers available.
- 5.3 Partnership tactical activity is primarily co-ordinated through a weekly Threat, Harm, Risk meeting, chaired by the Chief Inspector for Local Policing. This meeting reviews Force tactical threats, serious organised crime activity, threat management, neighbourhood crime, offender management and forthcoming prison releases, ASB, upcoming events and agrees deployments and focus priorities for the coming week. In addition, location specific Problem-Solving Groups co-ordinated by the ASB Team or Police focus on hot spot locations and co-ordinate a range of preventative, diversionary and enforcement activity to reduce incidents and provide community reassurance.
- 5.4 Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) have been implemented by the Council to deal with persistent ASB in specific locations; there are four current PSPOs in Woodchurch, West Kirby, New Brighton and Bromborough. These Orders prohibit anti-social behaviours impacting the local community, the penalty for breach of which is by way of Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN).
- 5.5 Anecdotally, ASB has become more transient, with groups of young people moving between locations across the borough, unfortunately resulting in ASB and crime. It should be emphasised that it is a minority of young people engaging in such behaviour. There is also a rising issue of groups of young people wearing face coverings, including balaclavas, to avoid identification; this is causing concern to many local residents. Work is ongoing to review any current PSPOs to seek to extend prohibitions to include face coverings where needed and the evidence supports; this is already included in the PSPO relating to Woodchurch. Analysis is also being undertaken to identify any further locations that may benefit from a PSPO being introduced, subject to consultation. Options to strengthen the capacity to enforce PSPOs are also being explored.
- 5.6 **Activity to tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB)**
- 5.6.1 There is a wide range and breadth of activity across the borough and across sectors to tackle ASB. Key elements of the Council's contribution have been highlighted below.
- 5.6.2 **Operation Openspace**
- 5.6.3 Operation Openspace, led by Merseyside Police, is operating over the summer months to help ensure that Wirral's open spaces, beaches and parks are safe and enjoyable to visitors. Working with the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Team, Detached Youth Work teams and Parks teams, Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service, HM Coastguard Wirral, British Transport Police and other services and partners, activity is focused upon key hot spots engaging with local residents, visitors and children and young people, gathering intelligence and tackling ASB and violence. This activity is being part-funded by Wirral Community Safety Partnership through the Merseyside Police & Crime Commissioner's Community Safety Grant.

5.6.4 Operation Staysafe

5.6.5 Aligned to and co-ordinated with Operation Openspace, Operate Staysafe focuses upon patrolling hot-spot locations to protect unsupervised children and young people and to reassure the public that issues of concern are being dealt with. The Operation identifies young people who are out late at night and at risk of becoming a victim of crime or being drawn into criminal behaviour and takes them to a place of safety. They are then returned to their parents, carers or guardians and follow up actions may then be put in place to stop problem behaviour from recurring.

5.6.6 The first Staysafe operation took place on 16 June 2023 with the place of safety convened at West Kirby Concourse. This multi-agency operation led by Merseyside Police included St Johns Ambulance who provided paramedic and doctor support and a Mobile Treatment Centre, to help provide medical care for young people found intoxicated. This uplift in resources was able to respond to a significant gathering of young people on a beach in West Kirby in which a 15-year-old male was the subject of an assault involving a knife and St Johns Ambulance was first on scene to administer medical treatment. The Staysafe operations are also part-funded by Wirral Community Safety Partnership through the Merseyside Police & Crime Commissioner's Community Safety Grant.

5.6.7 Early Help & Prevention Co-ordination Hub

5.6.8 The Council's Early Help & Prevention Service (including its Youth Justice Service) is leading on a multi-agency approach to prevention through an Early Help & Prevention Co-ordination Hub. The Hub receives referrals for support for young people who are at risk in the community. A variety of partners work together to identify need and the best service to support the child/young person. The activity of the Hub is overseen through a strategic meeting chaired by the Head of Contextual Safeguarding, with the contribution of senior managers from a number of agencies and service areas who can support and drive the operational delivery.

5.6.9 Turnaround Programme

5.6.10 Wirral Youth Justice Service has received Home Office funding for a three-year period (2022-2025) for the Turnaround programme; to target offending behaviour and anti-social behaviour and reduce the number of first-time entrants into the criminal justice system. The aim is to improve life chances and reduce offending, violence in the community and anti-social behaviour incidents.

5.6.11 Data analysis has showed that many young people have had various touch-point moments with the Police but did not enter the Youth Justice Service for months or several years until after their first contact; these highlighted potential missed opportunities to intervene and divert children and young people from crime and ASB. Wirral has utilised the Turnaround funding to target young people identified through Police data who are arrested for an offence but either bailed or released with 'No Further Action'. Three additional officers have been appointed to run the programme with young people identified through referral to the Early Intervention & Prevention Hub, through the provision of group activities and one-to-one interventions.

5.6.12 HM Government Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan

5.6.13 On 27 March 2023, the government published its Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan to crack down on ASB and restore people's confidence that ASB and crime will be quickly and visibly punished. Community Payback Unpaid Work

Local Authorities are key to the success of Community Payback, enabling the delivery of community projects including painting and decorating work, grounds maintenance, litter and fly tipping projects, tree planting, graffiti removal, and work in parks and open spaces, through visible reparation for crime. Many local authorities have already agreed work programmes with Community Payback, and Wirral has a long history of community payback delivered through Wirral Probation Service. Community Payback plays a key role in the Action Plan, giving communities the confidence that these crimes will be quickly and visibly punished. A Community Payback rapid deployment model is being piloted in up to 12 local authorities to clean up graffiti, litter, and remove fly-tipping within 48 hours of notification by the local authority. There is an ambition to roll this model out across England and Wales in 2024 but will require agreements in place with all local authorities. There will be further engagement shortly with Local Authorities via the Local Government Bulletin.

5.6.16 Immediate Justice Pilots

Merseyside was selected as one of 10 initial trailblazer police force areas to pilot a new policy of Immediate Justice, whereby those found committing ASB will be made to repair the damage they inflict on victims and communities. Through this programme, police officers will issue out-of-court disposals to ASB perpetrators with conditions to swiftly repair any damage (or undertake some other civic activity) – the aim being for them to start within 48 hours of a relevant order or referral to the Funder Service being made. The types of services and activity undertaken should be informed by community engagement and consultation and, where appropriate, (e.g., for public facing/outdoor work), participants should wear high-visibility clothing, clearly branded as part of the Immediate Justice programme, to ensure maximum visibility to the public. This will be rolled out nationally in 2024. Police and Crime Commissioners will take a leading role, commissioning services for Immediate Justice to fulfil out of court disposals, working with local authorities, the police, youth offending teams and other agencies to do so. An initial discussion took place with Merseyside Police & Crime Commissioner's Office in May 2023 and a verbal update will be provided at this Committee following the anticipated conclusion of that dialogue shortly. £1m has been allocated to Merseyside to deliver this pilot.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

7.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

8.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

8.1 There are no resource implications arising from this report.

9.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 9.1 Information on the key risks faced by the Directorate and the organisation and the associated mitigations and planned actions are included in the Directorate and Corporate Risk Registers.
- 9.2 Corporate savings taken in 2022/3 in relation to the Wirral Community Patrol/Emergency Control Room service, resulting in a reconfiguration of the service, has had impacts in terms of the capacity to respond to incidents of ASB and other public safety matters. The capacity to respond to ASB is being mitigated slightly through utilisation of grant funding from the Merseyside Police & Crime Commissioner to add capacity in the short-term.
- 9.3 The challenges in relation to tackling violent crime and steps to mitigate are set out in this report.

10.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 10.1 Neighbourhood services and partner organisations including Merseyside Police carry out a range of consultation and engagement with residents to work to optimise service delivery and outcomes for residents.

11.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity. There are no direct equality implications arising from this report.

12.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 There are no environmental and climate implications generated by the recommendations in this report.
- 12.2 The content and/or recommendations contained within this report are expected to have no impact on emissions of Greenhouse Gases.

13.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 The activity supports the reduction of crime and anti-social behaviour in the borough which has a range of community wealth implications. This includes increasing safety for people, protecting community assets and local businesses and the ability to tackle any inaccurate perceptions of crime in Wirral. The impact of these can lead to investment in the borough, increase footfall in businesses including retail and the night-time economy and creation of local employment opportunities.

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APPENDICES

None.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

HM Government Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan, March 2023.
Wirral Community Safety Strategy (2021-26)

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

| Council Meeting | Date |
|---|------------------|
| TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE AND LEISURE COMMITTEE | 9 March 2023 |
| TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE AND LEISURE COMMITTEE | 1 December 2022 |
| TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE AND LEISURE COMMITTEE | 26 July 2022 |
| TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE AND LEISURE COMMITTEE | 12 October 2021 |
| COUNCIL | 6 September 2021 |
| TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE AND LEISURE COMMITTEE | 27 July 2021 |